

Title: Beyond the Classroom: Engaging Families, Educators, and Learners

Description: In this episode, Dr. Barbara Boone shares the importance of schools, families, and communities partnering together as a critical impact of a child's learning process. You can find more information about the work that Dr. Boone and her team do by going to their website <https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/>, following them on Twitter @OhioEngage, or liking them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/OhioSFE>.

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Fara Allen: Welcome to CETE Works, a podcast produced by the Curriculum and Training Team at the Center on Education and Training for Employment—a translational research center on Ohio State's campus. We work where research meets reality. I'm your host, Fara Allen, a Program Coordinator at the Center. This podcast series will focus on the various approaches and supports that our center offers to educators of all learners. How do educators engage, nurture, and support their learners? Listen in on these discussions that highlight how educators can connect with and understand their learners! At CETE, we believe that everyone deserves to experience lifelong learning! To learn more about our work, you can visit our website CETE, that's C-E-T-E, dot O-S-U dot E-D-U. In this episode, Barbara Boone joins me as our featured guest. Barbara is the Principal Investigator and Director of the federally funded Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center at CETE. She is an advocate of building partnerships between home, school, and communities for all children. Barbara and her team work to create professional development, tools, and processes for families, school personnel, and organizations. We're happy to have her join us to talk more about her work!

Fara Allen: Hi Barbara, I'm happy to have you join us today. Can you start us off by explaining the importance of partnerships between schools and how it relates to supporting educators and helping them to understand their learners and their learners needs?

Barbara Boone: Sure, you know, families are people we learn from, and homes are places of learning like beginning with birth through adulthood. And it's not hard to imagine some of the most important lessons in life we learn are from our families in our homes, the types of skills and knowledge that are really lasting and they help us keep our jobs, like kindness, flexibility, listening to others, creativity, honesty. And families really have an influence on a student's sense of belonging in their schools. Their motivations for learning, their expectations of themselves, or sense of efficacy. What I mean by that is like this idea that they believe they can be successful at learning themselves and their abilities for interacting with other adults in the school. And that's not to mention occupations, hobbies, interests of families that children are exposed to. Children and adolescents see the possibilities for their own future selves through the things they see their families doing in their adult lives. And families are really in tune with what their children love most, what motivates them, what their interests are, what

their aspirations are, all of these aspects of families as teachers and as people with a deep understanding of their kid really makes parents, or other caregivers, experts at supporting their children's learning and understanding their learning needs. They're really, they're really critical. I would say they're necessary partners for teachers and administrators and schools, who are working with children, and adolescents each day. I mean, and just to be clear, too, if I say parents in this podcast, I mean all of those amazing people who are raising children -grandparents, foster parents, aunts, uncles, adoptive parents. So, if I occasionally do say parents that's who I mean. I don't want to exclude anyone because we have, families are all different, and so we have lots of people who are loving and raising and parenting kids.

Fara Allen: Thank you, this is a significant connection and also, I think most people are familiar with The Ohio State University. But maybe aren't as familiar with your program at the Center. So, as the director of the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center, can you please share with us how your work at the Center directly connects to supporting families and also how you got involved in this specific work?

Barbara Boone: Sure okay. So, at CETE, I direct a variety of programs that are all aimed at strengthening that sort of important partnership between home and school. We conduct research with OSU faculty. We study research and develop resources for teachers and school administrators, for parents, and organizations. We provide a lot of training and workshops. And we work with school districts, state agencies, national organizations, to assist them in their work through our technical assistance. So personally though, I came to CETE through my own studies and research and my personal interest really. I studied physiology in college, which may seem disconnected but there was, I had electives and I took an elective class. And what fascinated me more than any other classes I took; it was a class in human development. And so, for my master's degree I studied human development and really focused on parenting and teaching of young children. And then after that I worked as an early childhood educator and a director and eventually, I worked full time training teachers and directors. And all that time I was really very aware of that inseparable nature of homes and schools for both raising and teaching our kids. And then when I came to OSU for doctoral studies, I decided to focus on that intersection of home and school, and I studied family studies and also education. And then I conducted research on studies of schools in Ohio and the impacts of their efforts to sort of build strong partnerships with families. And at the very same time I was enrolling my oldest child in kindergarten and living through this experience of being a parent negotiating this partnership with my child's teachers and observing other teachers and other families and kids and really, really, a lot of room for improvement for all of us. So, my work at CETE is sort of this, I would say natural extension of my studies and my experience and now really at CETE there's a whole team of really talented professionals who have expanded this work far beyond what I could have imagined.

Fara Allen: Well, I think that even though it's a natural connection it sounds very fascinating. Thanks for sharing that with us. The Center's fortunate to have your expertise and leadership. Tying into the overall theme of this series, can you tell us how this works benefits, educators, and learners directly?

Barbara Boone: There are many years of research and more studies every year demonstrating that beneficial impact for teachers, for schools, for families and children and adolescents from these partnerships between home and school. The benefits are really seen in preschool through college. So, when schools and families have these strong partnerships, we see teachers who have an increased understanding of their students. They're more effective in their instruction. They end up having higher levels of trust with families which leads to teachers having higher expectations of their students. And studies have shown that teachers enjoy their work more, they have better perceptions of their own schools, and they even have greater job satisfaction. So, not surprisingly, schools with strong systems of partnerships with families tend to be higher performing schools overall. Family engagement is understood in research to be sort of a critical element of high performing schools, not something you can kind of subtract and still have a really high performing school. And compared to similar schools serving similar communities that do not have a strong, so if I have the same school same communities, and I have one that has this really strong relationship building with families, working together with families and others that don't attend to that, we see real achievement differences there. And so, when you sort of remove those partnerships remove that trust they'll be between home and school, and we don't see that same level of student achievement. So, families who really partner in their child schools and they see benefits to and by partners. I want to be clear; I don't mean to say attending PTO meetings or a field day or signing the permission slip or the reading log these types of opportunities that schools offer to families, they're not bad. But they are not the types of opportunities that really have a strong impact on student learning or student well-being. Instead it's when we see families holding high expectations for their children's learning at school and they communicate well with the school. And families are encouraged to support their child's learning at home. When they advocate for their child's learning and they kind of understand the progress that they're making, that's when we really see these benefits. And families who partner with a child school have a better understanding of what's going on in school and a higher level of trust with teachers. They have higher expectations for their own child and for even going on and completing their occupation, which is the reason why we do all of this work right. It's for students and their futures. And students are more likely to graduate, likely to pursue higher education and have successful careers. They're more likely to feel like they belong at school, they're more likely to have these childhood experiences that we see that really buffer the negative childhood experiences in their lives. They have improved mental health, less likely to abuse drugs. There's lots of benefits for kids, they're more likely to have the sense that they have lots of adults in their lives, who care about them and who they can talk to.

Fara Allen: As a parent, as an aunt, and just as a person in the community, I think that makes perfect sense. Following that explanation, can you tell us what motivates you to do this very important work what keeps you excited?

Barbara Boone: I'll tell you I am so inspired, excited by the stories of families and principals and teachers and students who tell their experiences. For teachers and administrators it's when I hear that the light bulb went off they have this understanding now and they value the benefit for students, the benefit to their school climate, to their community, and for their own work that comes from engaging families really in very authentic partnerships, Especially when educators experience more inclusive partnerships with families, not just families that are like them and the families they would sort of naturally interact with. But all families, no matter where they live, no matter who they are. When I see educators doing that work and coming back and saying wow this really changes things in our school. I'm really inspired when I hear the perspectives of families shift from a more negative perspective to this more positive one. Really acknowledging families of expertise. They're very valuable and when I see that respect and valuing of families of all races and cultures and language groups, from any part of town. And I think I'm inspired most, I think, because in follow up to the stories of change perspectives with of families, I hear about how a whole community of families and their children now have this more impactful meaningful experiences with education. Because of this, administrators change, and teachers change. The families they interact with have a different experience, a more meaningful connected experience to education. And, ultimately, I know that that's going to lead to higher quality education for kids.

Fara Allen: That is motivating. How do you turn that around to inspire others I know we've already talked about the importance of inspiring educators and learners but how do you turn your motivation around into something that continues to support and inspire educators and learners?

Barbara Boone: Well, I and my team at CETE really take every opportunity, just like this one, to talk about the importance of families and schools, communities all working together for every child to support their education and to set them on that course for their best future. We help by creating useful tools for educators, that are grounded in research, by providing training to professionals and speaking and providing resources to families, creating networks between districts in Ohio and parent organizations like the Ohio PTA and the Ohio Commission on fatherhood and early childhood head start, special education, urban leagues, rural communities, OSU extension, the state library. I mean, we try to build those networks amongst them because we all sort of have this shared goal. And those are all organizations that recognize that families are critical to this and working together that just really helps all Ohioans more. And we really want to seek out new areas, ways to grow the research like the federally funded statewide family engagement Center grant that we have at CETE. We're one of 12 federally funded statewide family engagement centers in the country, and it was really important to me that we competed for that grant and brought it to Ohio and to CETE. We are really

committed at CETE to bringing research to action. We call that being a translational research center. Basically, it means we take the discoveries of research studies, and we bring them to schools, we bring them to our homes of Ohio so that, you know, everything that we do is based on our best understanding of research and then that benefit to children and their families. And now as a statewide center we're expanding our outreach beyond Ohio to many other states and our national partners.

Fara Allen: I love that you said every child the work you and your team do at the center is vital to our community, our educators, our learners, and our families. And since we strive to be lifelong learners at CETE and we embrace a learning culture, maybe you have your own learning experiences that you wouldn't mind sharing with us today. Can you tell us what professional development you've participated in most recently and what your biggest takeaway was or how did you grow from that experience?

Barbara Boone: You know I attend a lot of national and local professional development, in order to stay abreast of new research and just the practices in my field and also just to hear what's working for Ohio families and for our schools. But I have to say that the most impactful learning for me has been right here at CETE and our CETE learning program for race equity diversity inclusion, we all call REDI very affectionately. You know, through the trainings that we've had with REDI through without tie leaders, through my own learning and our CETE learning modules. Through my experiences with my critical allies group through other professional development that I've sought out on my own. What I'm learning through that has really truly enriched and challenged and expanded my understanding of how family engagement and education is impacted by race, how it contributes to inequities, or can be work toward help us work toward equity. How it can benefit from diversity of people and ideas and perspectives and how it can be a positive force for ensuring that there's access to high quality education for all children. Because every child has the right for a chance to receive the education, they need right for their best their brightest future. And because of these studies with CETE, I'm much better at what I do and I'm much more of the person that I want to be because of all that I've learned through that.

Fara Allen: I think that's a perfect explanation of enrichment, it's being the person you want to be. Thank you for letting us have a deeper look into your own learning and I have one last question for you today. Is there any knowledge or skills that you sought out to gain during the pandemic I know you've taken advantage of some online webinars and whatnot but was there anything specific that you'd said, I have this time I'm going to learn this new knowledge or skill?

Barbara Boone: Sure, well I'll give you some personal and I'll give you some more related to my field, and you know, of course I looked for new ways to exercise new ways to learn right, I think a lot of us did that. And I am working to develop my own expertise in a whole other field by studying I study with the OSU extension Program. To be a master gardener volunteer in my county so I completed my studies I'm trying to get more experience and hours as a volunteer. And that's been exciting, for me, I love to

grow plants but and I love to grow people I love to grow families, I mean I think growing people and plants is kind of a theme for me. But in regard to my work with you know seat CETE with our team and the statewide family engagement Center I'd have to say that we really learned. worked hard to learn how to provide the same and even improved supports for families and schools in a virtual environment we've hosted conferences that we never hosted before we're bringing in national experts for hundreds and hundreds of people more than we were reaching in initially. And we presented it in in conferences all over the country through these virtual environments we learned how to do that and learn how to be pretty good at it. We really want no matter where we are to represent Ohio State well to represent CETE well and to do really an excellent job, so I think that has been something that I've learned how to do a lot of technical things there and I think my goal now is to really. Not to spring back to the old way now things are kind of opening up and we're kind of looking and let's go back it's not just sort of go back to the old way, but really to be new and fresh and innovative with all these things that we've learned. reflect on the history and learn from that but continue to move forward in the best way we can for Ohio's families and schools and children so yeah.

Fara Allen: I love that fresh innovative outlook, it was a pleasure to have you with us today, Barbara, thank you for taking the time to share your expertise insights and your personal story with us.

Barbara Boone: Well, thank you for the invitation for this conversation and the chance to tell others about this important work at CETE. I hope listeners are going to check out our website they're going to subscribe to our monthly email news and guidance and follow us on Twitter and Facebook, that would be phenomenal to stay connected with people that way.

Fara Allen: We'll make sure we share that in our description.

Barbara Boone: Thank you.

Fara Allen: You're welcome. On behalf of the Curriculum and Training team at The Center on Education and Training for Employment, we'd like to thank our guest today. If you would like more information on this topic, please contact us at go.osu.edu\OhioState4Work. We would be happy to hear from you and share more information about our services and our work. Follow us on Twitter at OhioState4Work. See our description for details. Thank you for listening to CETE Works, we hope you enjoyed this episode. Be well and bye for now.